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AUTHOR Stahlhut, Richard; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The training of beginning teachers and the mentor protege relationship that exists between those beginners and experienced faculty is currently of much interest to teacher training institutions and K-12 schools alike. This interest is the result of some of the initial research findings that suggests a protege learns effective teaching procedures quickly and efficiently when a mentor is part of their first teaching experience. Currently there exists a modest research data base to support these observations. This study sought to extend the current knowledge base as it relates to Reciprocal Mentor Protege Relationships (RMPR) during student teaching and how these relationships are perceived by cooperating teachers and by student teachers. A questionnaire and weekly journal entries were used to judge the developmental process, benefits and growth cycle. Student teachers were given training at seminars on ways to elicit mentor role behaviors from their cooperating teachers. The results of this training were compared to results of a previous study were relationships developed naturally. Implications for teacher education are cited. (Author)

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Coaching Student Teachers to Elicit Mentor Role Behaviors From Their Cooperating Teachers

Richard Stahlhut, Session Organizer
Richard Hawkes, Professor
Joseph Fratianni, Assistant Professor

A paper presented to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
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ABSTRACT

The training of beginning teachers and the mentor protege relationship that exists between those beginners and experienced faculty is currently of much interest to teacher training institutions and K-12 schools alike. This interest is the result of some of the initial research findings that suggests a protege learns effective teaching procedures quickly and efficiently when a mentor is part of their first teaching experience. Currently there exists a modest research data base to support these observations. This study sought to extend the current knowledge base as it relates to Reciprocal Mentor Protege Relationships (RMPR) during student teaching and how these relationships are perceived by cooperating teachers and by student teachers. A questionnaire and weekly journal entries were used to judge the developmental process, benefits and growth cycle. Student teachers were given training at seminars on ways to elicit mentor role behaviors from their cooperating teachers. The results of this training were compared to results of a previous study where relationships developed naturally. Implications for teacher education are cited.

BACKGROUND

If mentors did not exist, we would have to invent them as children have always done. They come in an array of forms, from the classic bearded Merlin to the grandmotherly fairy godmother to the other worldly elfin Yoda of the Star Wars trilogy. Myths, fairy tales, fantasy, and children's stories abound

with mentor figures. They come from a place in us as deep as our dreams. Carl Jung tells us that the archetype, which may be of either sex or both, represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition. The mentor appears in a situation where insight, understanding, good advice, determination, and planning are needed but cannot be mustered on one's own; often arriving in the nick of time to help the traveler along the journey.

Mentors are creations of our imaginations, designed to fill a psychic space somewhere between lover and parent. Not surprisingly, they possess magic and play a key part in our transformation. Their purpose is to remind us that we can survive the terror of the coming journey and undergo the transformation by moving through, not around, our fear. Mentors give us the magic that allows us to enter the darkness; a talisman to protect us from evil spells, a gem of wise advice, a map, and sometimes simply courage. But always the mentor appears near the outset of the journey as a helper, equipping us in some way for what is to come, a midwife to our dreams.

The term mentor was first popularized by Gail Sheehy in 1976. More recently we have been told that success, whether in industry or academia, is a lot slipperier without a mentor to show us the ropes. A handful of books and dozens of articles now proclaim mentors' virtues and defects. However, relatively little has been said about mentors as guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers, and point out unexpected delights along the way. There is a certain luminosity about them, and they often pose as magicians in tales of transformation, for magic is a word given to what we cannot see, and we can rarely see across the gulf. As teachers, we have much to learn from the mythology of the mentor.

In spite of the interest in Reciprocal Mentor-Protege Relationships (RMPR), there is little agreement on the meaning of the concept or of the role behaviors that are part of its makeup. The educational community has increasing developed interest in the concept and its possible application in teacher preparation and development. Scheim (1978) identified eight possible role behaviors a mentor may fulfill. He suggests that three of the eight behaviors must be present before a relationship has matured. Gehrke and Kay (1984) used Scheim's model to study 41 beginning teachers and found that one in seven had a RMPR and that college professors were most likely to serve as the mentor. Clawson (1980) has shown that mentors are oriented towards others, analytical, tolerant of ambiguity, and value and respect those colleagues that report to them. This suggests that in a mentor-protege relationship there is a superordinate-subordinate hierarchy between the two persons rather than the two being peers. The California Mentor-Protege Study (1985) suggests that relationships also develop between peers, in teaching, especially if the peer teachers are in the same building and at the same grade level or in the same curriculum area.

There are two areas where little or no research data could be found in the literature search; (1) studies that specifically focused on teachers during the student teaching stage of their career development and (2) the limits of RMPR, thus inviting inquiries into possible negative outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current literature provided some helpful and insightful knowledge about the mentoring process. But there remain some areas that need to be further investigated, especially as they relate to student teaching:

(1) If student teachers are encouraged through training, will a greater percentage of student teachers experience a RMPR with their cooperating teachers than those who naturally formed these relationships?

(2) What role behaviors, as defined by Scheim, are most easily shared? Are most powerful?

(3) Are the role behaviors provided by mentors the ones they really believe are most important and most desired by student teachers?

(4) How were the role behaviors developed and what were their salient characteristics?

(5) What critical events/qualities helped or hindered the development of the mentor relationship?

(6) What benefits were gained from having a RMPR?

(7) What presage variables and school context variables are related to achieving/supporting mentoring relationships?

(8) To what extent did having time together initially without children (Preschool workshop) help the mentoring relationship?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Forty-two University of Northern Iowa student teachers participated in the study along with their cooperating teachers. The students were placed in student teaching centers that were at least 100 miles away from campus. Student teaching is a one-half semester field experience where the curriculum requires each student teacher to participate in seminars, reflective record keeping (journals), an action research project, teaching and conferences. Elements of the master teacher and effective instructional models are

stressed. The student teachers were assigned to each center by the Office of Student Field Experience and then actual placements based on the student teachers preferred teaching level, subject area and anticipated compatibility were made by the resident university supervisor.

Analysis

Twice during the student teacher's clinical experience the student teachers were given information and instruction both written and oral about how they could better develop and maintain a RMPR with their cooperating teacher. They were encouraged to look for opportunities and to be creative in the ways they elicited cooperating teachers to fulfill mentor role behaviors. (See Appendix A.)

Near the end of each week student teachers were required to send a journal to the university supervisor. The journal was to focus on how the mentor-protege relationship was developing, i.e. things the student teacher had done to promote the process and for the student teacher to give a concrete example that demonstrated a specific role behavior had been acted upon.

At the completion of the experience a questionnaire was administered to all 42 student teachers and their cooperating teachers. In both cases 100% of the participants responded. The respondents identified mentoring relationships they perceived had formed based on the definitions in Appendix A.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings are presented in the order in which the research questions were stated earlier in the paper.

(1) What is the extent of RMPR between student teachers and cooperating teachers?

Student teachers and cooperating teachers were asked if a mentoring relationship developed. The researchers also established as criteria that at least three of the eight role behaviors had to match to confirm the relationship actually developed. In other words, the student teachers and the cooperating teachers both had to check at least three of the same role behaviors before a match was confirmed. The results showed 37 or 88% RMPR were identified. In an earlier study, Soroka (1985) found 51% of the cooperating teachers naturally formed mentoring relationships with their student teachers but in that study there was no minimum number of role behaviors required. In some cases only one or two role behaviors matched in that study.

It was especially interesting to note that where a RMPR had developed, the cooperating teachers, 17 or 46%, and the student teachers, 31 or 84%, felt the relationship should have been allowed to develop naturally. The cooperating teachers were not trained but the majority, 20 or 54%, felt they should have been, while the student teachers were trained but only 6 or 16% felt they should have been. When asked how their training actually influenced the relationship the median value student teachers gave was that it had a "neutral" effect and the mean value indicated it only had a "slight influence."

(2) What role behaviors are most frequently shared/powerful?

Each role behavior was examined independently. Cooperating teachers most frequently picked Developer of Talent 35 or 94%, Teacher 34 or 92%, and Confidant 32 or 86%. In close parallel to this the student teachers picked Developer of Talent and Confidant 36 or 97% and then Teacher and Role Model 35

or 94%. Overall, student teachers stated they received more role behaviors than the cooperating teachers felt they provided.

The dominant behaviors picked by both mentors and proteges were: Developer of Talent 30 or 81%, Teacher 29 or 79%, and Confidant 28 or 76%. All the actors evidently believed the major purpose of this clinical experience was to develop the student teacher's pedagogical skills. Therefore, most of their communications focused on this task.

The behaviors least provided or least accepted were Sponsor 15 or 41%, Protector 7 or 19%, and Opener of Doors 6 or 16%.

(3) Were the role behaviors provided by mentors actually the most important? Did student teachers want what they were provided?

The single role behavior ranked as being the most important was Role Model. Cooperating teachers checked it 16 or 44% and the student teachers checked it 13 or 36% of the time. Speculating as to why this role behavior was so important but not most often provided might lead one to believe that measurement is difficult and feedback is intangible when compared to modeling, coaching and sharing confidences. It appears the participants were unsure if they were providing or receiving this role behavior.

There was mutual agreement for the next two most important role behaviors: Teacher 11 or 31% by cooperating teachers and 8 or 22% by student teachers and Developer of Talent by 7 or 19% of the cooperating teachers and by 12 or 53% of the student teachers. Depending on your perspective, these two role behaviors are very closely related. When mentors believe they are teaching, proteges may interpret this as developing their talent and vice versa.

(4) How were the role behaviors elicited, enacted and what were their salient characteristics?

Tallies were made of the number of times that student teachers made reference to each of the 8 mentor behaviors in their weekly journals for seven weeks of the student teaching term. No particular pattern seemed to emerge. Perceived mentor behaviors appear to be situationally related. That is, a student teacher who is close to completing degree work might be more prone to seek out the Sponsor and Opener of Doors behaviors than would one who would not be graduating until the end of the next semester.

There is a direct relationship between the number of citations in the student teaching journals and their responses on the final survey instrument (see table 2). The top four matched role behaviors found in journals are identical to the top four perceived in the questionnaire. Confidant, Developer of Talent, Teacher and Role Model finished in the same order in both cases. The student teachers' perceptions and entries regarding role behaviors related in their journals very closely matched their perception of the mentor behaviors they received during the total student teaching experience.

(5) What critical events/qualities helped or hindered the development of the mentor relationship?

Question four on both the Mentor and Protege questionnaire was an open-ended question designed to solicit those items perceived to be helpful to or a hindrance to the Mentor/Protege relationship. The common relationship was helped or hurt by the communication process. Open communication was the top item as a helpful quality to a Mentor/Protege relationship. Poor communication was also noted as a hindrance to building such a relationship. Not having enough time together was also a common response as a hindrance. It was

interesting to note that both groups felt a need to develop a closer personal (social)relationship. The top five (5) helpful qualities and the top five (5) items that hindered a Mentor/Protege relationship can be found in Table Five of the appendix.

(6) What benefits were gained from the mentor-protege relationship?

Question Five, like question four, was also open-ended. It was constructed to allow both the Mentor and Protege to share what they felt were the benefits gained from their relationship. It was interesting to note that both groups felt that they had gained a "new friend." Both groups also indicated that they gained a positive feeling about their teaching. The five most common responses for each group can be found in Table Six of the appendix.

(7) What presage variables and school context variables are related to achieving/supporting mentoring relationships?

Within the sample no correlations between a mentor's assignment, gender, age or years of experience contributed to the development of a RMPR. Proportionally there were more secondary RMPR than were expected, but this was minimal. This finding was contrary to what Soroka (1985) found in his study.

The median cooperating teacher's age was 41-45, 73% were female, typically they had a BA+ but less than an MA and they averaged 16-20 years of experience. Student teacher's mean age was 23 and 73% of them were females. No attempt was made to match genders in the placement process.

There was good communication between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher when it came to evaluation. In 20 or 54% of the dyads the mentor's evaluation exactly matched the student teacher's self-evaluation. In 29 or 78% of the dyads student teachers were thought to be by their

cooperating teachers in the top 25% of all University of Northern Iowa student teachers. When this central group of 42 student teachers final evaluations were compared to the other 78 student teachers assigned elsewhere the first quarter, they ranked in the upper 2%. Student teachers who had a RMPR definitely got a much higher final evaluation than did the typical University of Northern Iowa student teacher.

(8) To what extent did the preschool workshop contribute to the establishment of the RMPR?

Time together without children initiated the mentor-protege relationship. In the dyads 24 or 65% agreed that it "positively" affected the relationship. Only 1 or 3% of the cooperating teachers and 0 or 0% of the student teachers said it "negatively" affected it.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

(1) When student teachers were trained to elicit role behaviors from their cooperating teachers in 88% of the cases a RMPR developed.

(2) Cooperating teachers and student teachers agreed in the same proportion that a RMPR did develop.

(3) Proteges believed they received more benefits from the RMPR than mentors believed they provided.

(4) Role Behaviors most frequently received and provided are closely related to teaching tasks. Implications are:

   A. Mentors and proteges need time to discuss personal and professional concerns throughout the clinical experience.

   B. Mentors must be effective and skillful in management and scientific

teaching techniques so that a protege can be coached through observation, discussion, and modeling.

C. Mentors need to critique protege behaviors and to do so in a positive manner.

D. Mentors find it difficult to determine to what degree they are serving as a Role Model for their protege. In a similar fashion they do not know to what degree their colleagues see them as a Successful Leader.

E. Mentors do not see themselves as being in a position to Sponsor or Open Doors for their proteges.

F. Proteges greatly appreciate their mentors efforts and feel this is why they were successful in this clinical experience.

(5) The degree of RMPR is very positively related to the student teacher's final evaluation.

(6) RMPR occur in all grade levels and in all curriculum areas K-12.

(7) The most hindering factor according to mentors is not enough time together and according to proteges is different time schedules.

(8) The major benefit mentors believe is forming a new friendship. Student teachers believe the major benefit is exposure to a good role model.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

(1) Teacher education programs should seek ways to promote mentoring relationships through preservice and inservice formats.

(2) University supervisors can and should facilitate the development of mentoring relationships during clinical experiences.

(3) Role behaviors that foster the mentoring process need to be more clearly

delineated so that better measurement of levels and degrees can be determined.

(4) The consequences of stress and time need to be investigated as to their influence on RMPR.

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APPENDIX A

In the broadest sense, mentors enhance a beginning professional's skills and intellectual development. As sponsors, mentors may promote the entry of a person into a profession and advancement within it. The educational mentor hosts and guides, welcoming the protege into the new professional and social world of the teacher and acquaints them with its values, customs, resources and characters. Through their own virtues, achievements and way of life, mentors may be an exemplar that the protege can admire and emulate. Further, the mentor can provide counsel and moral support in times of stress. Some believe that the mentor's primary function is to be a transitional figure, fostering the beginning teacher's development from child-in relation to parental-adult to adult in peer-relation with other adults, i.e. the mentor is a mixture of parent and peer.

It has been stated that the most critical function of mentors is the support and facilitation of the person's dream. The "true mentor" fosters the beginning teacher's development by believing in them, sharing in the dream and giving their blessing. In addition, the mentor helps define the emerging professional self of the beginning teacher and helps create a space in which the teacher is able to form a reasonably satisfactory life that contains the dream. It seems, then, that mentoring may not simply be defined in terms of formal roles, but rather in terms of the character and qualify of the mentor-protege relationship and the function it serves.

In summary, then, a mentor is thought of as a person who is a non-family member who provides some of the following role behaviors:

Mentor Role Behaviors

(1) Confidant: A person to whom secrets are confided. The mentor was interested and available to hear and counsel me about personal and professional concerns and problems during student teaching.

(2) Teacher: One who instructs/impacts knowledge. The mentor actually modeled instructional techniques as they applied to subject matter, children, parents, and colleagues.

(3) Sponsor: To answer and vouch for. The mentor believes in me and wholeheartedly supported me as a candidate for teaching positions for which I am qualified.

(4) Role Model: A standard that exemplifies excellence. The mentor demonstrated superior professional qualities that I aspire to duplicate. The mentor encourages me to "act" like a professional.

(5) Developer of Talent: To coach and challenge. The mentor encouraged, assisted and provided me with opportunities to develop and improve my instructional skills. Feedback was provided and I was "coached" on more ways to be successful.

(6) Opener of Doors: Heading for professional objectives. The mentor introduced me to influential people and opportunities which may further my career.

(7) Protector: One who defends. The mentor stood up, spoke up and defended me to others even though I made an error.

(8) Successful Leader: Demonstrates leadership/management skills. The mentor was recognized by other professionals as a person who gets positive results with the projects he/she undertakes. I observed, was encouraged to set high standards and am now better prepared to assume this role in my own professional career.

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN SUMMARY TABLES

Table 1. Frequency and percent of mentoring relationships as identified by student teachers and cooperating teachers.

Population	Yes	No	< 3 matches *	Sample size
Student teachers	37(88)	1(2)	4(10)	42(100)
Cooperating teachers	37(88)	1(2)	4(10)	42(100)

* The student teacher and the cooperating teacher did not match 3 or more role behaviors.

Table 2. Frequency and percnt of occurence of the eight role behaviors as identified by mentors, proteges and as matched pairs. (n=37)

Role Behaviors	Mentors	Proteges	Matched pairs
1. Confidant	32(86)	36(97)	32(86)
2. Teacher	34(92)	35(95)	33(89)
3. Sponsor	19(51)	26(70)	15(41)
4. Role Model	31(84)	35(95)	29(78)
5. Dev. of Talent	35(96)	36(97)	34(92)
6. Opener of Doors	8(22)	16(43)	6(16)
7. Protector	20(54)	13(35)	7(19)
8. Succ. Leader	30(81)	34(92)	27(73)

Table 3. Frequency and percent of role behaviors when ranked for importance by mentors and proteges. (n=36) *

Role Behaviors	MRB #1	PRB #1	MRB #2	PRB #2	MRB #3	PRB #3
1. Confidant	4(11)	10(28)	7(19)	4(11)	4(11)	8(27)
2. Teacher	9(25)	3(8)	11(31)	8(22)	6(17)	8(22)
3. Sponsor	1(3)	1(3)	1(3)	5(14)	1(3)	2(6)
4. Role Model	16(44)	13(36)	8(22)	6(17)	3(8)	7(19)
5. Dev. of Talent	5(14)	8(22)	7(19)	12(33)	12(33)	6(17)
6. Open. of Doors	1(3)	0(0)	1(3)	1(3)	1(3)	3(8)
7. Protector	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(3)	1(3)
8. Succ. Leader	0(0)	1(3)	1(3)	0(0)	8(22)	1(3)

* One piece of missing data. Role behaviors were rated but not ranked.

TABLE 4. Frequency of mentor behaviors as recorded by student teachers in journals by weeks.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7 *	T
1.	Confidant	26	16	12	18	10	11	4	97
2.	Teacher	14	12	11	6	12	8	2	65
3.	Sponsor	3	7	6	6	4	8	4	38
4.	Role Model	15	5	10	8	5	3	2	48
5.	Dev. Talent	10	15	15	11	10	9	3	73
6.	Open Doors	5	5	2	3	3	3	2	23
7.	Protector	1	2	1	5	4	2	1	16
8.	Succ. Leader	8	7	10	1	6	5	2	39

* Full responsibility teaching reduced journal expectations.

TABLE 5. Frequently cited events/qualities that helped or hindered the development of the mentor-protege relationship.

Benefits (Mentors)	Benefits (Proteges)
1. Similar values, goals and interests	1. Mentors interest in me, personally
2. Open communication	2. Mentor was a good listener
3. Honest with each other	3. Open communications
4. Protege was a good listener	4. Could discuss anything
5. Similar/compatible personalities	5. Mentor's willingness to share ideas

Hindrances (Mentors)	Hindrances (Proteges)
1. Not enough time together	1. Different time schedules
2. Protege had "set" ideas	2. Lack of time together
3. Not knowing Protege as a person	3. Not enough personal (social) time
4. Protege not communicating	4. Not enough constructive feedback
5. Not enough social time	5. Different personalities

Table 6. Frequently mentioned benefits of a RMPR as indicated by mentors and proteges.

Benefits (Mentors)
1. A new friendship
2. Insight into my classroom
3. More positive feeling about my teaching
4. New ideas and activities
5. New insights about individual students

Benefits (Proteges)
1. Exposed to a good role model
2. Confidence
3. A new friendship
4. Organization and planning
5. Insight into teaching

Table 7. Student teacher final evaluation results when a RMPR developed.

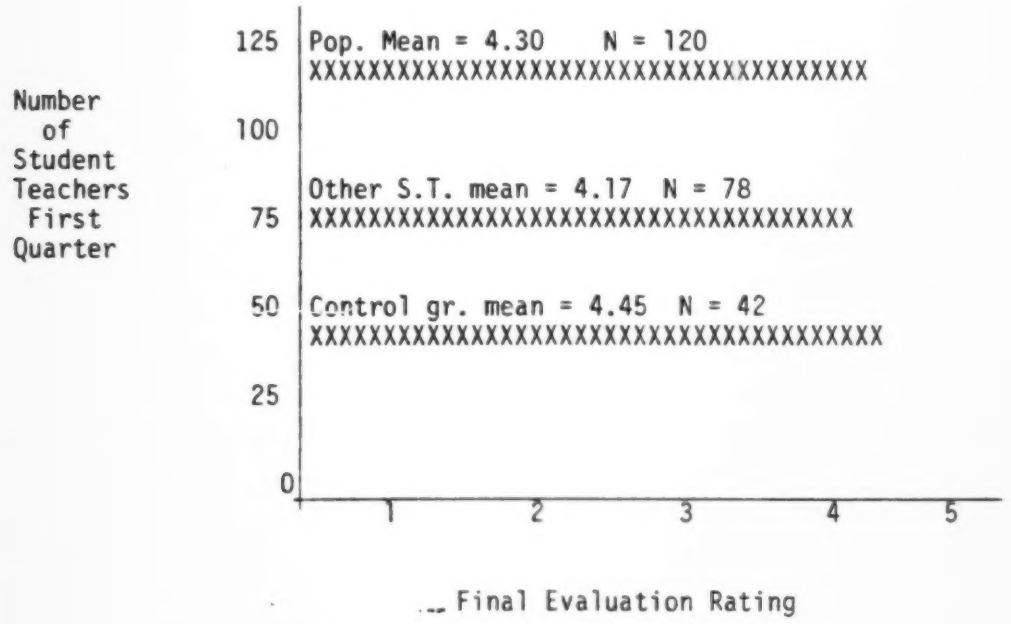

Table 8. Frequency and percent of influence the preschool workshop had on RMPR as identified by mentors and proteges. (N = 37)

	Influence	Mentor	Protege
1.	Positive	26(70)	32(86)
2.	Neutral	10(27)	5(14)
3.	Negative	1(3)	0(0)